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VIII
OCCURRENCE OF SOME ASIATIC BIRDS IN ALASKA

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During the summer of 1927, Mr. C. G. Harrold, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, spent several months on Nunivak Island, Alaska, collecting birds and mammals for the California Academy of Sciences. The skill and energy that he displayed in the field resulted in a large and important collection, one that merits a detailed report. This will be finished as soon as possible, but the completion and publication of such a study will necessarily take some time and in the interim it seems desirable that certain outstanding discoveries be placed upon record at once, so as to make the facts available to others without delay. The data given regarding the several species here listed pertain to occurrences that must be taken into consideration in the compilation of the forthcoming American Ornithologists' Union *Check-List of North American Birds*. The birds here listed were all collected on Nunivak Island. This is a relatively large island, in Bering Sea, near the mainland coast of Alaska at a point about midway between the mouths of the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers.

I am indebted to Dr. A. Wetmore, Assistant Secretary, Smithsonian Institution, and to Mr. J. H. Riley, of the Division of Birds, United States National Museum, for their identification of the species of *Anthus*, for their corroboration of

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my tentative identification of the species of *Prunella* and *Locustella*, and for the loan of specimens of *Pyrrhula*. It is gratifying, too, to be able to say that Dr. Wetmore and Mr. Riley agree with my disposal of *Pyrrhula cassini*. The above mentioned birds were all submitted to their scrutiny.

Charadrius mongolus mongolus Pallas

Two specimens: C. A. S. no. 31029, female, August 14; C. A. S. no. 31030, male, September 1. Two others were seen on August 14, one on September 11, and one on September 13. The basis for the inclusion of this species in the A. O. U. *Check-List* was the record by Harting¹ of the capture of two specimens on the Choris Peninsula, Alaska, in 1849. That those birds were actually taken on the Alaskan side of Bering Sea has been questioned, at least by inference,² but a later record by A. M. Bailey,³ of one collected at Cape Prince of Wales on June 11, 1922, has placed the species on a secure basis among our North American birds. The *Check-List* definition of the manner of occurrence as "accidental" should probably be modified to "casual" or "rare," and the brackets enclosing the entry of the species in that volume should be removed, as, in fact, they probably should be also from other Asiatic species that have been taken in Alaska.

Pyrrhula pyrrhula cassini Baird

The collection includes three bullfinches from Nunivak Island, a take of startling interest, considering the period that has elapsed since Dall's specimen of *Pyrrhula cassini* was collected at Nulato, January 10, 1867, and the fruitless search that has been made for the species by collectors in Alaska since that time. The three skins (C. A. S. nos. 30973-30975) consist of a male in "adult" plumage (sex not determined by dissection and marked as a young bird on the strength of a "granulated" skull), October 13; a female, October 12; and a second female (sex not determined by dissection), October 16.

¹ Ibis, 1870, p. 389.

² Dixon, Auk, XXXV, 1918, p. 390.

³ Condor, XXVIII, 1926, p. 85.

In the study of these birds I have been allowed to borrow from the United States National Museum the type of *Pyrrhula cassini* and three specimens of "*Pyrrhula pyrrhula kamtschatica*," the latter collected at Petropaulski, Kamtschatka.

Pyrrhula coccinea, var. *cassini* Baird⁴ was based upon Dall's Nulato specimen above mentioned, until now the only example of the genus to be taken in America. Due largely to the arguments of Stejneger⁵ this bird has since been generally associated with a central Siberian species, named *Pyrrhula cineracea* by Cabanis.⁶ The name *cineracea*, of course, has of late been regarded as a synonym of *cassini*. In *cineracea* the male is gray-breasted. The outstanding feature of our small Alaska series is the fact that the male is a red-breasted bird, which implies either a revision of our conception of *cassini* or else the presence of an additional species of *Pyrrhula* in North America.

The type specimen of *cassini* is not in very good condition. The skin contains no filling, the plumage on back and wings was damaged somewhat when the bird was shot, and the outer rectrix on one side is missing. On the original label it is marked male, or, rather, with the female sign inverted, which may be taken to mean male, but, as Stejneger (*loc. cit.*) has pointed out, there is no doubt that it was a female.

Females of the several species of *Pyrrhula* are very nearly alike, so much so that in most published descriptions of the species differences in the males alone are emphasized. A red-breasted bullfinch, a slightly differentiated subspecies of *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, occurs upon Kamtschatka, nearer to Alaska than is the Siberian habitat of the gray-breasted bird to which the name *cassini* has been applied. The probable specific identity of *Pyrrhula cassini* Baird and that species, *Pyrrhula kamtschatica* Taczanowski,⁷ has been suggested by Sharpe,⁸ but apparently Stejneger's (*loc. cit.*) arguments to the contrary have carried conviction that the Alaskan type of *cassini* was a stray of the central Siberian species.

⁴ Trans. Chicago Acad. Sci., i, 1869, p. 316, pl. 29, fig. 1.

⁵ In Turner, Contributions to the Natural History of Alaska, 1886, p. 169; Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., X, 1887, p. 103.

⁶ Journ. für. Orn., XX, 1872, p. 316.

⁷ Bull. Soc. Zool. France, VII, 1882, p. 395.

⁸ Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., XII, 1888, p. 452.

The capture of our three specimens from Nunivak Island, including a red-breasted male, re-opens the question. These birds are obviously the same as the Kamtschatka form, and the only point at issue is the proper allocation of the type of *P. cassini*. The four females before me, one from Kamtschatka, two from Nunivak Island, and the type from Nulato, are so nearly alike that I can see no grounds for separating them. The various details of appearance in the Nulato bird cited by Stejneger (*in* Turner, 1886, p. 169) as placing it with *cineracea* rather than with a form of *pyrrhula*, are elusive and variable characters, and are, I believe, to be explained on the basis of individual or seasonal variation. Of such characters there may be mentioned the red marking on the innermost tertial, present on the male from Nunivak, absent from the two females; the white marking on the outer rectrices, which is present in varying degree on six of the seven specimens here assembled (absent from one, present on one, of the two males from Kamtschatka); shade of gray above and drab below, which seems to vary seasonally and certainly varies in different individuals. The two Nunivak Island females, taken at the same time, differ appreciably in shade of body color; one of them is more nearly like the Nulato skin than is the other.

My conclusions are as follows: That the type of *Pyrrhula coccinea*, var. *cassini* Baird is the same as the form of *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* that occurs on Kamtschatka and which has been named *Pyrrhula kamtschatica* Taczanowski. This name will be replaced by *Pyrrhula pyrrhula cassini* Baird, the appellation to be used in our *Check-List* for the Alaska bullfinch. The central Siberian form which has gone under the name of *Pyrrhula cassini* Baird will become *Pyrrhula cineracea* Cabanis.

Anthus spinoletta japonicus Temminck & Schlegel

One specimen: C. A. S. no. 30778, female, September 10. There is a prior record for this bird in North America, based upon the capture of one on St. Paul Island, in the Pribilof group, on August 29, 1916.⁹ That specimen is in the United States National Museum, and being examined by Dr.

⁹ Hanna, Journ. Wash. Acad. Sci., vol. 9, 1919, p. 176; Auk, vol. 37, 1920, p. 251.

Wetmore and Mr. Riley during their scrutiny of the bird here recorded, it proved to be not *japonicus* but a somewhat unusually colored example of *Anthus spinoletta rubescens*.¹⁰

The present is therefore the first recorded occurrence of the Japanese Pipit within the confines of the A. O. U. *Check-List*.

Locustella ochotensis (Middendorff)

One specimen: C. A. S. no. 30760, female, bird-of-the-year, September 15. The range of Middendorff's Grasshopper-warbler includes the north-eastern coast of Siberia and the Kurile Islands, so that its occurrence in Alaska is no more extraordinary than that of some other Asiatic birds that regularly cross Bering Sea. The capture of this bird adds to our *Check-List* a species and genus in the family Sylviidæ.

Prunella montanella (Pallas)

One specimen: C. A. S. no. 30759, female, October 3. Again a species that extends across Siberia to the shores of Bering Sea, and thus of not entirely unexpected occurrence in Alaska. The capture of this accentor, a relative of the English "Hedge Sparrow," adds to our *Check-List* not only a new species and genus, but a new family, the Prunellidæ ("Accentoridæ").

¹⁰ Riley and Wetmore, *Condor*, XXX, 1928, p. 193.